

knows how important his family is and the high value he places on his children and their friends. He is truly a most kind, gentle, and readily approachable father, uncle, and godfather.

His concern about others' children and family members is equally heartfelt. As he exercises his many leadership roles, Senator STEVENS is always willing to take our family obligations into account. He realizes how important it is to schedule time for our families in the chaotic, hectic life we lead in the United States Senate.

In addition to the close personal friendship we have enjoyed with the Stevens family, I have had the opportunity to work closely with Chairman STEVENS as a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

As chairman, TED is solicitous of the concerns of even his most junior members. He is also a devoted friend of his partner—sometimes ranking member and sometimes chairman—Senator DAN INOUE.

While there is never any doubt that he and Senator INOUE control the Defense Appropriations call, Senator STEVENS is sensitive and receptive to the needs of other Members to the greatest extent possible.

He is a very passionate defender of the Appropriations Committee, its prerogatives, and its responsibilities. Woe unto the person who attacks the appropriations process or the work that he does. One soon learns that such a position is not one to be taken lightly. One had better be prepared for a bruising fight.

As President pro tempore, he was a faithful and dedicated leader of the Senate. Now that he is—temporarily—out of that position, he continues a close working relationship with his good friend and colleague Senator ROBERT C. BYRD, the current President pro tempore.

It is, indeed, an honor to have him as our leading senior Republican in the Senate.

The Senator's influence extends far beyond the Senate to Alaska, the Nation and the world.

Many of the accomplishments of the Senate over the last 4 decades bear the mark of TED STEVENS. He has been tireless in his leadership to secure a strong military—and has funded a strong personnel system, the most needed, up-to-date equipment and the most promising research. The current strength and superiority of the U.S. Armed Forces is due in no small part to Senator STEVENS.

He has also been a leader in the natural resources, transportation issues, and climate change issues important to all of America but that particularly affect his home state.

TED is passionate about Alaska—its natural beauty, its people, its needs and its fishing. Many of us have enjoyed traveling to Alaska with Senator STEVENS and discovering first-hand the treasures it has to offer.

The many roads, parks and buildings named for him are but a hint of all he

has done for the State. His contributions are extensive and lasting, from improving the infrastructure to safeguarding the wildlife and natural resources Alaska has in abundance.

Alaskans rightly dubbed the Senator the "Alaska of the Twentieth Century." I am sure Senator STEVENS would remind us that he is not done yet. Odds are he is a favorite to be "Alaskan of the Twenty-first Century" as well.

It has been a tremendous honor and privilege to serve with TED STEVENS. I look forward to many more years of working together.

Mr. MARTINEZ, Madam President, I wish to acknowledge an esteemed colleague and his long and storied service to the United States Senate. Senator TED STEVENS has given much to this great country of ours. Born in Indiana, he spent his college years in the West, his law school years in the East, and made significant contributions in a place far north of here. Yet he achieved much of this by heading south, to our Nation's Capital. His career reflects his dedication not only to Alaska but to all of America. He has touched every corner of this country—and beyond. Fighting in China during World War II, he served our Nation valiantly as a member of the Army Air Corps where he flew support missions for the Flying Tigers of the 14th Air Force. Now, more than six decades later, he is still serving our country.

Following work as an attorney in Alaska in the 1950s, TED STEVENS headed for Washington to work for the Department of Interior under the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. It is worth noting that it was President Eisenhower who signed Alaska into statehood in July of 1958. Not too long after Alaska found statehood, he decided to return to the home he had made in the Last Frontier. Soon, he was serving in the State house of representatives—a body of which he became the majority leader in 1964. While he may have initially found his way to the U.S. Senate by virtue of appointment in 1968, he soon had the weight of his State's voters behind him.

Now serving his seventh term in office, Senator STEVENS has been a reliable supporter of his home State's interests and has supported our country in many of its most trying times. The institutional knowledge and wisdom which Senator STEVENS brings to the Senate benefits this body greatly. All of us appreciate his work and contributions to America. Be it as the former chairman of the Commerce Committee, the former chairman of the Appropriations Committee, a strong voice and dedicated member of the Homeland Security Committee or for his work on the Rules Committee—we thank him for his leadership, past and present.

Congratulations to Senator STEVENS on becoming the longest serving Republican in Senate history. His more than 14,000 days in this body are a remarkable testament to his hard work,

staying power, and skills as a Senator. I know the people of Alaska appreciate all that he has done for them over these numerous decades. On behalf of my fellow Floridians, I thank Senator STEVENS for his service to America and to the Senate.

RETIREMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL BARRY COSTELLO

Mr. LEAHY, Madam President, In the opening days of the war in Iraq in 2003, before ground forces moved into the country, I received an e-mail at a particularly suitable moment. Just when I was about to step into a meeting with President Bush at the White House, in came a message from my friend and colleague, then two-star Rear Admiral Barry Costello.

Admiral Costello was in command of Cruiser-Destroyer Group One, based in the Persian Gulf. Its flotilla, including the aircraft carrier USS *Constellation*, was launching cruise missile and air strikes, while its contingent of over 7,000 marines waited to move into the country. Barry poignantly said, "we are in the forefront—and are working hard to make America proud."

I showed that note to the President. He and I disagreed on pretty much everything in the runup to the war, but at that moment we had a shared pride in Barry and the men and women under his command. The expertise, dedication, and sheer patriotism on display there in the gulf was beyond question. That moment crystallized the depth of gratitude that not only we elected leaders in Washington but also every Vermonter and American feel for our Armed Forces.

Barry Costello has recently retired from the Navy after a stellar 36-year career. At every stage, before and after his command during the second Iraq war, professionalism and pure competence have been deeply etched in Barry's career. Whether in postings on the Joint Staff or on the USS *Elliot*, which he commanded, Barry has impressed those above and below him in the chain of command. His knowledge of the Navy—its organization, its mission, its capabilities is unrivaled.

That thoroughgoing command of his surroundings, that superb ability to contribute to the larger organization made him a natural to serve as a legislative liaison here in the Senate and Congress as a whole. Whenever I or any of my colleagues had a question about some program, however obscure, Barry could answer it or get us answer in pretty short order. He was a strong conduit in the other direction too, providing insights to the senior Navy and Department of Defense leadership about the concerns of Congress. In short, he was the perfect liaison.

It was fitting that Barry capped his career with command of the Navy's Third Fleet, based out in San Diego. One of the most powerful forces in our military's arsenal, the Third Fleet established itself with distinguished service under the legendary ADM William

F. "Bull" Halsey. Barry's leadership combines the steadfastness of Halsey and the eagle-eye vision of a Nimitz. At the Third Fleet, he showed himself a Navy officer's officer.

At 56, Barry still has ample contributions to make to our country, whether in industry or further public service. He has already served as an inspiration to the Navy and Vermont, and I have no doubt that he will continue make enormous strides on behalf of others in whatever endeavors he pursues.

I know I will run across Barry very soon, but I want to congratulate him, his loving wife LuAnne, and their two sons Brendan and Aiden. The Senate, Vermont, and the country join me in expressing our deep gratitude. Thank you.

RURAL BROADBAND

Mr. ROBERTS. Madam President, I rise today to speak about rural America, and the need to ensure that this cornerstone of our way of life has the same access and availability to modern technology that many Americans take for granted. Specifically, I am referring to the availability of high-speed Internet, also known as broadband.

Broadband Internet is essential to rural development. It does for rural areas today what interstate highways did in the 20th century, and railroads did in the 19th century. It is key to attracting new businesses to rural areas, and helping our existing rural businesses grow and become more competitive.

Unfortunately, rural America continues to lag behind its urban and suburban counterparts when it comes to the availability of this essential resource. It is not that rural folks do not want broadband, but only that they do not have as much access.

In the 2002 farm bill, Congress created a loan and loan guarantee program to help build broadband out to rural areas that lacked this crucial service.

The Rural Utilities Service, RUS, an agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture, was charged with the responsibility of administering the broadband loan program and using it to promote access in unserved, rural areas.

Unfortunately, the agency's implementation and administration of this program strayed from the rural focus Congress intended.

Instead of targeting our rural areas, huge sums of money have been used to provide broadband in urban areas, suburban developments, and towns that already have service.

Instances of waste and abuse have been clearly illustrated by the USDA inspector general, in hearings held by both the House and Senate Agriculture Committees, and in prominent news reports.

There is wide, bipartisan agreement on what is wrong with this program. I believe that there should also be wide,

bipartisan agreement on how to move forward.

While a number of legislative and regulatory fixes have been suggested here in Congress and by the RUS, none so far have been comprehensive enough to surmount the challenges of deploying broadband in rural America.

I have been proud to reach out to my friend and colleague, Senator SALAZAR of Colorado, on the Senate Agriculture Committee to work toward a solution. It is the Committee on Agriculture that has jurisdiction over this program, and it is from this committee that a way forward must be found.

Together, myself and the distinguished junior Senator from Colorado, have worked toward a consensus driven, comprehensive approach to promoting broadband in rural America. On Monday of this week, we introduced legislation to accomplish this goal, the Rural Broadband Improvement Act of 2007.

This legislation will provide the secretary with additional guidance to direct broadband loans to those truly in need by clarifying where, when, and to whom loans can be made. It ties approval of loans to a requirement of nonduplication of service, making this legislation significantly more robust and less ambiguous than the current statute.

The issue of duplication of service, more than any other issue, has been the subject of criticism of the RUS. When RUS makes loans in areas that already have broadband service, it has a twofold negative affect.

First, it undermines the market. Often, rural towns may enjoy broadband availability. Small, independent providers that are already present in rural towns have their subscribers pulled out from under them by a competitor who, because they have an RUS loan, have an unfair advantage with which to offer lower rates. This can threaten the very existence of some locally owned, independent broadband providers that invested in rural towns without an RUS loan.

Second, when loans are going to areas that already have service, it means that truly unserved, rural areas for which this program was created continue to be neglected. Indeed, it is the outlying, sparsely populated areas that are in need of broadband service. These are the areas broadband loans should be made to serve—not overbuilding towns where the service is already present.

This is unacceptable. That is why this legislation which I am introducing on behalf of myself and my colleague from Colorado will attach to the definition of eligible rural community, a clearly defined requirement of non-duplication of broadband service.

Reforming and improving the broadband loan program means doing more than just addressing this one aspect for which it has been criticized. It also means eliminating unnecessary and unprecedented limitations on what borrowers are eligible to participate.

In particular, I am referring to the conspicuous 2 percent telephone subscriber line limit. This limitation acts as a disincentive for growth; unnecessarily penalizes larger, but still rural-focused phone companies; and ignores the reality that more and more households are abandoning land line subscriptions in favor of wireless communication. The bottom line is that limiting what providers can participate in the program does nothing to expedite broadband deployment in rural areas.

This legislation also streamlines the application and post-application requirements. For many small and independent providers with limited staff, it can be discouraging to look at a 38-page application guide to a 57-page application. What's more, those who go through this arduous process may wait for a seemingly indefinite period of time for a yes or no to whether their application is approved.

To address these matters, the act directs the Secretary to complete application processing within 180 days and allows parent companies and their wholly owned subsidiaries to file a single, consolidated application and post application audit report.

The bill further streamlines the application process by eliminating various other duplicative and burdensome application requirements, and directs the agency to hire whatever additional administrative, legal, and field staff are necessary to meet these requirements.

The act also contains powerful incentives to increase the feasibility of loans. First, it allows limited access to towns where broadband may be available, but in circumstances when doing so is necessary to building broadband out to the sparsely populated and outlying areas that have no service at all. I do want to stress, however, that this is not a loop-hole that will lead back to the problems of duplication and overbuild. The majority of households to be served by the project financed with an RUS loan must be without access to broadband. Additionally, the act creates better transparency and requires incumbent providers to be properly notified when an RUS applicant plans on doing so.

Second, the act ensures that collateral requirements are commensurate to the risk of the loan.

Third, instead of requiring an inflexible 20 percent equity requirement, the act provides more flexibility for small and start up companies by requiring only 10 percent equity, and allowing the agency to waive this requirement so long as the applicant can prove that it will be able to pay back the principal of the loan plus interest.

This legislation also codifies an innovative grant program based on the successes illustrated in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Broadband deployment in rural areas will work better once we know where it already is. To do this, grants will be made available to help fund partnerships between state